

Maryland Conservation Corps



Annual Report 2017-2018



MD Park Service
Department of Natural Resources
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Overview and Mission



Managed by the Maryland Park Service since 1984, the Maryland Conservation Corps provides members with opportunities for personal and professional development and to receive hands-on training in a variety of environmental and natural resource-based careers through a supportive, team-based environment that emphasizes the satisfaction of completing projects that benefit Maryland's natural resources.

The program focuses on three critical areas of conservation work: **environmental and park infrastructure restoration, trail and waterway improvement, and environmental education and interpretation.** MCC members provide critical support to parks as a cost-effective, well-trained, highly motivated, and flexible workforce.



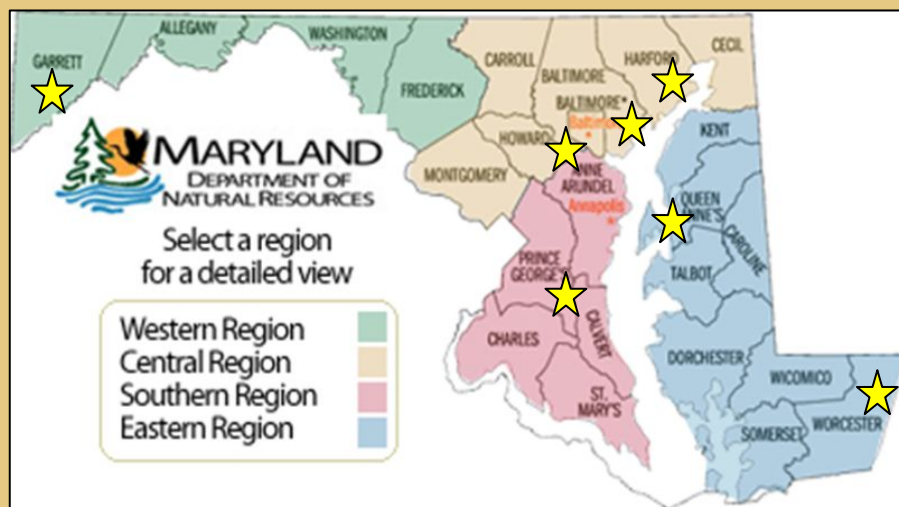
Program Structure



Statewide, there are **35 members** working in crews of five and hosted in **7 Maryland State Parks**.

Each site has an MCC Crew Leader and MCC Ranger Supervisor, who work with the Park Management to develop meaningful conservation projects, provide guidance on daily activities, and mentor members in professional development and public land management best practices.

The MCC Headquarters Staff provides administrative and logistical support, provides training and troubleshooting, mentors Crew Leaders and members, coordinates statewide projects, and manages the AmeriCorps grant.



Program Goals



Environmental and Infrastructure Restoration

Members work on landscaping and construction projects, including: planting native trees and shrubs, removing invasive species, clearing hazardous trees, installing signs and wayfinding, removing trash and debris, and repairing buildings and infrastructure.

Waterway and Trail Improvements

Members lay out and construct safe and sustainable trails and work to manage human impact through the use of trail blazing, fencing and signage. They: assess and remove downed and hazardous trees, build boardwalks, repair eroded areas, restore streams and wetlands, and install living shorelines.



Environmental Education

Members lead school field trips, campfire programs, guided hikes and canoe/kayak trips. They also: lead nature walks, operate visitor centers, host special events, lead structured park programs and roving interpretive programs, support the Park Service's Scales & Tales injured wildlife program, interpret the natural history of Maryland's parks, and lead and participate in various outreach programs, festivals, and displays.

Program Benefits



- Bi-weekly living allowance
- Health care benefits
- Child care assistance (if eligible)
- AmeriCorps Education Award of \$5,920 that may be used toward school tuition, most federally approved student loans, or future education costs for up to seven years
- Low-cost park housing (first-come, first-served)
- Extensive training, professional development, and skill certifications
- Strong mentorship and networking opportunities



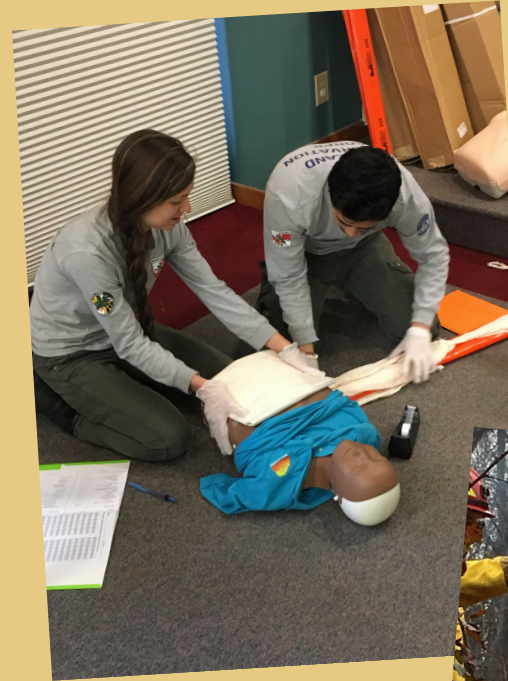
Member Development



MCC provides members with opportunities for professional development in emergency response, landscaping, environmental restoration, construction, and facility management.

Certifications

- 48-hour First Responder (advanced first aid and CPR)
- 40-hour Wildland Firefighting
- Environmental Education and Interpretation
- Chainsaw Skills and Safety
- Leave No Trace ethics
- Trail maintenance, monitoring, and construction
- Canoe trip leading



Additional Training

GIS, Search and Rescue, Ropes Course Instructor, Registered Pesticide Applicator, Water Quality Monitoring, Tool Safety, and Welding



Diverse Participants



The MCC recruits from a diverse candidate pool that builds the program's workforce with highly motivated and dedicated individuals. Members draw upon varied backgrounds, education, and life experiences to accomplish program goals and projects. Crew members learn valuable communication, coordination, and collaboration skills as they work together in a team-based format to solve problems, coordinate logistics, and accomplish goals.

After graduating, MCC Alumni have advanced into careers with the Maryland Park Service, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, the Maryland Forest Service, NASA, and a variety of non-profit organizations. Many have gone on to become teachers.



Program Partnerships



Maryland Environmental Trust

Crews monitored conservation easements and verified compliance with easement conditions.



National Aquarium in Baltimore

Members worked on conservation projects, including tree plantings, shoreline restoration, BioBlitz species counts, and wetland clean-ups.

MD DNR Chesapeake and Coastal Service

Crews worked on restoration projects including invasive species removal, shoreline and stream restorations, tree plantings, and tree and shrub maintenance.



Preservation Efforts



Treated **4,178** Hemlock trees in Western Maryland to prevent depredation from the hemlock woolly adelgid and treated **300** Ash trees for the invasive Emerald Ash Borer.



Planted **500** Hemlock saplings at three state parks.



Worked with Forest Service staff on prescribed burns to improve forest health at **1** state park, **3** wildlife management areas, and **2** Nature Conservancy properties

Planted approximately **7,708** trees and shrubs, plus **22,850** bay grasses and other native plants.



Removed invasive species from parks across the state.



Park Improvement Projects



MCC Crews improved **2,384** acres of park and public lands, benefiting one million park visitors and numerous plant and wildlife species.



Members completed **over 100** park recreation and facility improvement projects that included: installing fences and signs, building boardwalks and bulletin boards, painting pavilions, removing invasive plants, repairing and maintaining facilities, and completing wildlife habitat improvement projects.

Trail and Waterway Improvements



MCC Members maintained 225 miles of trails and waterways by building, clearing, re-routing, and blazing trails, and by restoring wetlands, creating living shorelines, and improving fish habitat.



Crews helped build a new trail at Palmer State Park.

Disaster Relief



Crews responded to **four disasters**, including floods and wildfires in Maryland and western states, providing skilled equipment operators and essential manpower. Often working long hours in harsh conditions, the crews are flexible and can mobilize quickly.



Ellicott City Flood Disaster Relief

Six of the seven MCC crews traveled to Patapsco Valley State Park, Avalon Area, to assist with cleanup after a historic flood swept through neighboring Ellicott City and the park on May 27, 2018. The disaster relief consisted of removing debris and trash along the Patapsco River and performing trail assessments in the areas that were severely impacted by the flooding.



Interpretation and Outreach



MCC Crews provided **Environmental Education** programs to **49,811** students, youth, and park visitors.



MCC Crews taught **Disaster Preparedness** programs to more than **300** elementary and high school students.



MCC members mentored more than **411** underserved youth through the **Conservation Jobs Corps (CJC)**.



Conservation Jobs Corps



MCC crews worked with **411 Conservation Jobs Corps** members, ages 14-17, for 5 weeks during the summer. MCC Members led projects that consisted of trail work, invasive species removal, bat box and bird box construction, park bulletin board painting, trail sign construction, and building and installing trash-free park bag receptacles.

MCC Members also led Enrichment Days for the Conservation Jobs Corps Members. They taught the members about fishing, canoeing, archery, stream surveys, hiking and bicycling, reinforcing the many values of outdoor recreation.



Special Events



Martin Luther King Day of Service

Several crews participated in the conSERVE DC: MLK Day of Service at Anacostia Park with the Student Conservation Association. This major volunteer event consisted of picking up trash in the Anacostia River watershed area.



The Corps Network Day to Serve

The Patapsco, Tuckahoe, and Merkle crews worked alongside many other AmeriCorps crews from across the country for the Great Outdoor Day of Service in Washington, D.C. Crews removed vines, trees, and other invasive species all over Lyndon Baines Johnson Memorial Groves.



First Day Hikes

MCC members from all of the crews assisted with and led First Day Hikes at parks across the state for **478** participants.

“Es Mi Parque” Events

Members from the Gunpowder, Merkle, and Susquehanna Crews assisted with Es Mi Parque events at Sandy Point State Park and Point Lookout State Park for approximately **800** Latino visitors.

Easter Egg Hunts

Assateague and Tuckahoe MCC Crews assisted with Easter events for **1,075** participants.



Program Accomplishments



On July 31, 2018, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources honored 32 graduating members of the 2017-2018 Maryland Conservation Corps.

The ceremony commemorated the members' completion of 10 months (totalling 54,400 hours) of job skills training, conservation work, and stewardship with the Maryland Park Service. The graduation ceremony emphasized the participants' achievements and the values imparted by their work, including leadership, responsibility, and effective teamwork.

"I don't think I've ever felt as strong of a person as I do today, because of this program"

MCC Member Christian Shields, Tuckahoe Crew



"My experience with the Maryland Conservation Corps is everything I hoped for and more. I've gotten to meet many great people whom I most likely would never have crossed paths with. Having a crew alongside you encourages you to bring out the best in each other. I've learned more working in the field than any college course was able to give me."

MCC Member Tyler Walker, Patapsco Valley Crew